

THE PENNSYLVANIA UTILITY LAW PROJECT

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August 24, 2011

Marlene Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communication Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: Ex Parte in Support of USDA WIC's Ex Parte Communication in WC
Docket 11-42 Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

We are submitting this Ex Parte letter in support of the inclusion of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) as a qualifying program for Lifeline and Link Up. The Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP) is a specialized legal aid office and part of the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network. PULP provides technical assistance, training, consultation, advocacy and support services in utility and energy matters to Pennsylvania's statewide legal aid network staff and clients, as well as to other non-profit community agencies serving low-income consumers.

PULP, in furtherance of its mission to support the ability of the low-income to connect to and to maintain essential telecommunications service, has a history spanning a quarter of a century of direct involvement in the development, promotion and monitoring of the Lifeline program in Pennsylvania.

The Lifeline and Link Up program is a vital safety net program that connects low-income consumers to essential telecommunications service, and it is essential to helping low-income consumers find work, housing, access and maintain contact with health care professionals and education providers, accessing emergency services, as well as remaining connected to support networks such as family and friends and community services. Yet, enrollment in Lifeline is undersubscribed with a nationwide participation rate of approximately 32 percent. In Pennsylvania, the participation rate is only 26 percent. Clearly, more can be done to encourage additional participation.

One very important step the FCC can take to address this low participation rate is to add WIC to the list of programs that make low-income households eligible for Lifeline and Link Up. WIC helps provide nutritious food to low-income women who are pregnant or have very young children up to age 5 and almost 70% of WIC participants are below the poverty line. WIC is available in all 50 states and by adding WIC to the list of eligible programs for Lifeline and Link Up, low-income WIC participants who may not participate in any of the other qualifying programs can still participate in Lifeline and Link Up.

PULP strongly supports adding WIC to the list of programs qualifying households for Lifeline and Link Up.

Respectfully submitted,



Patrick M. Cicero
Staff Attorney

On behalf of the low-income clients PULP represents